

A GUIDE  
TO  
JEWISH RITUAL

RECONSTRUCTIONIST PRESS



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TO  
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## P R E F A C E

THE FOLLOWING *Guide for Jewish Ritual* was prepared in its present form at the request of the delegates who attended the 1961 Conference of the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Fellowships. It is based on an earlier and briefer Guide, which, in a somewhat revised form, later was incorporated in Mordecai M. Kaplan's *Future of the American Jew*. At the 1962 Conference in Skokie, Ill. a full discussion was held and many additions and revisions were proposed. The present text incorporates these changes and represents in substance the consensus of the group.

APPEARING as a separate document here, the *Guide* may not be understood in its proper context, namely, as only one small segment of a total philosophy of Judaism for our time and of an overall program to implement that philosophy. It is therefore important to state here at the outset that, while ritual is extremely important, it represents but one aspect of Jewish religious life. In the Reconstructionist philosophy, Judaism is more than a religion; it is an evolving civilization. As such, it must express itself in land, language, communal organization, ethics, literature, art and in religious thought—as well as in ritual.

ONE FURTHER WORD of clarification—and caution: A *Guide* is not a code; those who were responsible for preparing the following text, therefore, do not submit it as infallible and hence unalterable. The views expressed here are those of men and women of this generation who are earnestly seeking a way of giving outward expression to what Jewish religion and the Jewish People mean to them. A serious and alert group of Jews, at some later time, may want to revise this *Guide* or write an entirely new one. Let no one conclude that this is intended to be the last word on the subject.

SINCERE THANKS are extended to Rabbi Ludwig Nadelmann whose many editorial revisions were incorporated into the text.

IRA EISENSTEIN

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **The Nature and Purpose of Ritual Observance**

In the matter of ritual observance, as in so many other phases of life, it is necessary to strike a balance between the spiritual needs of the group and those of the individual. A satisfactory rationale for Jewish usage is one that would recognize in it both a means to group survival and enhancement on the one hand, and on the other, a means to the spiritual growth of the individual Jew. This is implied in the fundamental principle of Reconstructionism that Judaism is a religious civilization. For a religious civilization is one which makes the group responsible for the spiritual development of the individual, for helping him to experience life as supremely worthwhile, or holy. The individual, on the other hand, has the responsibility of helping the group of which he is a part to survive in a creative and meaningful manner. This is his way of helping his fellow-Jew to experience the spiritual impact of their common tradition. Thus the term "*mitzvah*," usually translated "commandment," connotes the two-fold character of the Jew's responsibility to himself and to the group. It conveys the idea that the duty of the Jew to make the most of his own and his people's spiritual potential is a *sacred* duty. Insofar as ritual can contribute toward this two-fold purpose it is religious ritual.

Through ritual observance, the individual Jew can know the exhilaration of fully identifying himself with his people and, thereby, saving his own life from dullness, drabness and triviality. Jewish tradition brings to the daily living of the Jew, to his holiday celebrations, to the celebration of turning points in his life, a wealth of beautiful and meaning-

ful symbols embodying the *sancta* of his people, expressive of its ideals and native to its culture. These should be retained and developed, for no religious affirmation, no ideal is effective except as it is translated into action of a systematic and habitual nature.

### **Variations in Ritual Usage**

The circumstances of life are so different for different Jews, their economic needs and opportunities, their cultural background, their acquired skills and inherited capacities are so varied that it is unreasonable to expect all of them to evaluate the same rituals in the same way. That was possible only where the Jewish community lived a self-contained life and could make possible for all its members, without undue sacrifices on their part, the uniform observance of all religious usages. It is not possible where, as in democratic countries, the Jew has to live in two civilizations and find his place in the full life of both the civic and the Jewish communities.

From this point of view, no stigma attaches to those who permit themselves a wide latitude in their departure from traditional norms. It is not appropriate, in dealing with matters of ritual, sanctimoniously to invoke God's pardon upon those whose transgressions are unavoidable, or to refrain from teaching the law on the basis of the principle that it is better for Jews to err unwittingly than to sin presumptuously.

### **Value of a Guide**

This does not mean that ritual can be left solely to the individual to deal with. The good which the individual hopes to derive from ritual usages is dependent on their power to effect his self-identification with the Jewish People and its spiritual heritage. Consequently, it is necessary to standardize those ritual usages so that they may symbolize the moral and spiritual values which Jews are expected to cherish. Moreover, as a result of the new experiences which

the Jewish People is bound to encounter in its career, the need for new rituals is certain to be felt and consideration would have to be given to the forms which they would have to assume.

### ***The Rabbi, the Layman and Ritual***

American Jews, living among a large majority of Christians, frequently absorb their neighbors' concepts and attitudes regarding the religious leader. Jews often fall into the un-Jewish habit of thinking of their rabbis as being somehow endowed with powers reserved for the "clergy." It is important that Jews remember that rabbis are not priests. Rabbis are teachers and leaders who occupy their positions by virtue of expertness, of specialized knowledge. They are not a separate order of beings.

Hence, in Jewish tradition, any Jew who achieved expertness could perform rituals: he could lead the congregation in worship, he could preside at funerals, etc. In dealing with Jewish rituals today, that tradition should be maintained. Jews should not imagine that any of the usages described below require the participation of a rabbi—unless, of course, his presence is needed for lack of otherwise qualified persons.

There are, however, two types of occasion when the rabbi should be expected to take part. One, when it is desired that the "Jewish community" be represented, or at least symbolized by the presence of a religious leader; and two, when, as in a wedding, the state requires the signature of one who is delegated to act as an official representative of the state.

### ***No Distinction Between Kohen and other Jews***

In the discussions of ritual which follow, the traditional distinction between the *Kohen* (priest) and other Jews is abolished. For many centuries this distinction was main-

tained in the hope that the ancient Temple would some day be restored and the sacrificial system revived. This hope is no longer cherished by the vast majority of American Jews, and therefore any rituals that presuppose the traditional distinction between the *Kohen* and the “ordinary” Jew is considered obsolete. Thus, for example, the rite of *Pidyon Haben* (redeeming the first born son) is not recommended.

### ***Equality of Women in Ritual***

In this *Guide*, women are recognized as fully equal with men in all matters of ritual. The tradition made a distinction between the sexes, exempting women from all *mitzvot* which had to be performed at a particular time. It was assumed that women were so preoccupied with the tasks of the household that they were not to be expected to participate fully in the rites and usages of Jewish religion. Today women have greater leisure; they also have gained a great degree of social and legal equality and do not wish to be excluded—nor should they be.

In individual instances, of course, the woman’s role remains intact; as, for example, in the lighting of the Sabbath candles.

## **PRINCIPLES OF EVALUATION**

The main criteria for judging the relative importance of religious usages are two: (1) the extent to which they communicate to one an awareness of belonging to the Jewish People, past, present and future, and (2) the extent to which that awareness is accompanied by the resolve to carry out the divine imperative to improve oneself and the world.

With this general understanding of the nature and scope of a guide to ritual observance, we set forth those principles by which we should be guided in adhering to Jewish ritual usage.

### ***Unity of Purpose, Not Uniformity of Procedure***

As explained above, the diversity of the conditions under which different Jews live renders uniformity unattainable and incompatible with differences in individual needs. But unity there must be, a unity of essential purpose: *the preservation and maintenance of a Jewish group life that shall be experienced by the individual as making his own life as a Jew significant and worthwhile.*

### ***Problem of Minimum Observance***

Once unity of purpose is assured, the possibility of diversity of form within limits must be provided for. In each area of Jewish ritual usage, the individual should find an opportunity for Jewish self-expression, in accordance with the circumstances of his life and the bent of his personal interests. There is a minimum to a ritual observance beyond

which that observance cannot be said to function at all. In actual practice, keeping to a minimum is evidence of lack of enthusiasm and a desire to dispose of a duty that is burdensome. Hence, only when one cannot, with the best of will, carry out more than a minimum should one resign himself to it. The main point is that ritual observance should occupy as much place in a person's life as will enable him to identify himself in spirit with the Jewish People and find Judaism a help to his personal self-fulfillment.

### **Stress on Affirmative Jewish Usages Rather Than on "Prohibitions"**

A necessary corollary of the criterion that Jewish ritual must enable the individual to experience Jewish life as worthwhile is a reversal of the relative importance which, in the popular mind and in the traditional codes, attaches to prohibitions and affirmative injunctions. From the legalistic viewpoint, the violation of a prohibition is a sin of commission, while the neglect of an affirmative injunction is only a sin of omission and consequently less reprehensible. But the moment we get away from this legalistic approach, the affirmative injunctions assume the more important role. For, in the realm of ritual usage, *desisting* from a specific act seldom carries with it the feeling of satisfaction that comes with the actual *performance* of a ceremony.

This does not mean that prohibitions have no value whatsoever. They do help to create the atmosphere in which the positive acts can be properly performed. Thus, for example, abstaining from routine labor and restricting movement on the Sabbath keeps members of a family together, and enables them to carry out the kind of religious program which is appropriate to the day.

### **Reinterpretation of Traditional Symbols and Rites**

One important value of the use of religious symbols is that, unlike articles of a creed, they permit new meanings to

be read into them which are relevant to the moral and spiritual needs of contemporary life. They thus help to bridge over the gap between the past and the present of the Jewish People and provide us with a sense of the historic continuity, which has far-reaching spiritual implications.

To illustrate the way new meanings may be read into traditional usages, we may consider the celebration of the Passover Festival. A careful reading of the traditional *Haggadah* read at the Passover *Seder* as well as the actual history of the Passover night celebration shows that celebration to have been intended as a means of reliving the experience of the Paschal sacrifice in and about the precincts of the Temple, together with the recital of the story of the miraculous redemption from Egypt. For those of us to whom the miracles associated with the Exodus are only legendary and the experience of taking part in animal sacrifices only to be remembered as a historical fact, the *Seder* on Passover night has acquired a new meaning. It stresses the spiritual significance of freedom, whether individual or national, as the very foundation of those human traits which are the basis of our faith in God and in man's capacity to build a world which may prove to be the Kingdom of God.

Two criteria are applied to the reinterpretation of symbolic objects and acts: (1) the new meaning given to the symbol must associate it with an ideal that has moral and spiritual value, and (2) the association of the symbol with the ideal must be appropriate and communicable.

The foregoing are the principles of evaluation which the *Guide* applies to the various areas of Jewish ritual usage. By their aid, it should be possible to satisfy the wants of those Jews who are looking for a ritual expression of their Jewish interests and loyalties but can find no adequate guidance in existing codes. Such guidance should enable them to find in Jewish traditional usages ways of maintaining their self-identification with the Jewish People, of achieving spiritual growth, and of experiencing joy and satisfaction in the process.

## **HOME DEVOTIONS**

### **Daily Worship**

An atmosphere of piety cannot be created in the home without the participation of all members of the family in home devotions. A realistic appraisal of the present situation, however, calls for some flexibility in the planning of such devotions. For example, it is unlikely that, in most homes, the family is together in the morning during the week, or that there is any leisure at that time to conduct group worship. However, every family should strive to set aside some time during the day when, in a relaxed and leisurely manner, home devotions can be conducted.

These devotions can take a variety of forms. They may include the chanting of the *Shema* or some other passage from the traditional forms of worship; they may comprise readings from the Supplement of the Daily or Sabbath Prayerbook (published by the Reconstructionist Press); or they may take the form of readings from Jewish texts which were not originally intended for devotional purposes but which lend themselves to reverential meditation. Male members of the family may don *tallit* and *tefillin*.

Variety from day to day is essential to keep the interest sustained. But there should also be some constant elements drawn from the tradition to maintain the continuity of experience.

The custom of dropping a coin daily or weekly at a special time into a Jewish National Fund box or one devoted to some general philanthropic purpose is recommended.

### **At Meal Times**

The dinner table is often the place best suited for family worship. At the beginning of the meal, the Grace should be recited (*ha-motzi*). At the conclusion, a brief thanksgiving prayer. At more formal meals, such as on Sabbaths and Holidays, the traditional *birkat ha-mazon* should be chanted.

### **At Bedtime**

The habit of reciting a prayer before retiring should be inculcated in children at an early age. It is a habit which adults keep up, finding in it a source of comfort. The text may be selected from any of the evening prayers, or from those designed especially for recitation before retiring. Individuals should attempt to formulate their own prayers, in their own words, as supplements to any of the traditional prayers recited.

### **Affixing the Mezuzah**

When the family moves into a new home or apartment, a *mezuzah* should be affixed to the doorpost. For the ceremony see The Reconstructionist Home Prayerbook.

## **THE SABBATH**

### **The General Significance of the Sabbath**

The Sabbath was envisioned as symbol of a life which fulfilled the deepest desires and highest aspirations of men. It was pronounced by our sages as a *dugma le-olam habba*, a specimen of the life to be lived hereafter, a parable of eternity, when all fears would be banished and all hopes realized. It helped Jews rise above preoccupation with the burdens, cares and trivialities of their daily existence and made them aware of the things worth living for. The Sabbath made them understand that life meant more than livelihood. They experienced then that freedom, serenity and relaxation of tension which made them realize that life had infinite possibilities of blessing. As such it was a day designed to evoke in man the image of the perfect world, by linking his life to those forces and powers which make for human salvation. This is the meaning of the covenant relationship between God and the Jewish People, as expressed through the Sabbath.

The rest enjoined for the Sabbath is to assume, therefore, spiritual dimensions designed to enable man to become more human, to broaden if but to a small extent his horizon and to deepen his roots within his family and people. The Sabbath rest is creative rest, not merely physical recess. "As the day of rest, it gives life its balance and rhythm; it sustains the week... Rest... is essentially religious, part of the atmosphere of the divine... it is that which re-creates and reconciles, the recreation in which the soul, as it were, creates itself again and catches its breath of life—that in life which is sabbatical... A life without Sabbath would

lack the spring of renewal, that which opens the well of the depth again and again." (Leo Baeck, *Judaism and Christianity*, page 183.)

These values we must endeavor to preserve, and both our affirmative and our negative usages must contribute to their realization. The extent to which we can practice even desirable Sabbath usages is not entirely in our hands, but it is important for us to have a clear conception of what an optimum observance of the Sabbath for modern Jews would involve.

### ***The Optimum Observance of the Sabbath***

*It must be noted that the prohibition of work on the Sabbath, though negative in form, contributes positively to the realization of those values that constitute the purpose of Sabbath observance. Our rule should be that only those activities should be forbidden on the Sabbath which tend to make us lose sight of the ends of our living in the pursuit of the means.*

The ordinary vocations of men and women represent a preoccupation with the means of living in a way that generally interferes with the immediate enjoyment of the ends. For these reasons, *an optimum observance of the Sabbath requires a cessation of all vocational activities.* Vocational activities include not only those engaged in by men in earning a livelihood, but also those usually engaged in by women in managing the purchase and consumption of goods by the family.

If the nature of one's occupation requires one to work on the Sabbath, this should be avoided during those hours in the morning set aside by the community for public worship.

But the suggested conception of the purpose of Sabbath rest exempts from the category of prohibited work those pursuits engaged in purely as forms of self-expression, especially those which the individual is unable to engage

in during the week, and which constitute not a means to making a living but a way of enjoying life. However, the exemption should not apply during hours reserved for worship and the study of Torah. The maximum opportunity for public worship must be maintained, and, in its interest, the individual may be expected to refrain, during the time for public worship, from activities which would tempt him not to participate in it.

What is true of creative art applies as well to healthful play. Particularly children and youth find refraining from sport and play on the Sabbath not restful, but irksome and enervating. Play may, therefore, be indulged in by adults and children on the Sabbath, but not during the hours that are set aside for religious services or for family meals, for the Sabbath should afford every opportunity for the strengthening of community and family bonds.

The traditional prohibition against travel should, in general, be preserved, again with the purpose of utilizing the Sabbath for strengthening home ties and the ties that bind the individual to his congregation and community. But, such being its purpose, the prohibition of travel should not be applied in such a way as to defeat that purpose. Consequently, travel on the Sabbath is not in violation when it is necessary in order to make possible joining one's family at meals or attending worship in the Synagogue of one's choice, or in any other way participating in an activity which is in accord with the spirit of the Sabbath. These could include, for example, visiting the sick or participating in or attending a cultural function.

Refraining from the switching on and off of electric lights and the use of the elevator adds nothing to the Sabbath's power to help us experience life as worthwhile, and, in fact, tends to make the observance of the Sabbath tedious and burdensome. The institution of the *shabbos goy*, which owes its origin to the meticulous observance of these and similar prohibitions, is undignified.

As a general rule one should not smoke in a Jewish institution or in the presence of those who might be offended by it.

In the application of all the suggested relaxations from traditional standards of observance, one important limitation must be borne in mind. We are living in an age of transition in respect to standards of observance. Jews who accept traditional norms find it most annoying and disturbing to be in the presence of other Jews who violate them unnecessarily. Good taste and consideration for the feelings of others, therefore, dictate that we avoid publicly flouting traditional standards where this is likely to be offensive to other Jews and to impair their full enjoyment of the Sabbath.

### **Sabbath Observance in the Home**

Important as is the observance of those usages which inhibit certain activities, their main importance lies in the opportunity they afford for practices that express positively the significance of the Sabbath. We have already stated above that rest alone is not sufficient to hallow the Sabbath. Its holiness, the quality that makes the Jew experience in its observance a reverent and grateful response to life, results more directly from positive observance and social usage. This applies particularly to the usages of the home. We must stress the creation in the home of an atmosphere which affords relaxation from the workaday struggle for existence with its anxieties, its petty irritations and its soulless routines, and which exhilarates us with a fresh perception and appreciation of life's blessings. It is for this reason that the Sabbath constitutes an entire day, from sunset to sunset and not an aggregation of disjointed ceremonial tidbits. For the tidbit stands in isolation; it cannot substitute for the whole and in and by itself is likely to be meaningless. In general, what matters is not the ceremonial observance of the Sabbath but the extent to which these ceremonies help one to

live and experience the Sabbath. Only then will the ceremonies acquire their proper meaning.

We shall discuss in greater detail what to do if the full observance of the Sabbath is impossible.

The traditional Sabbath had for our fathers a therapeutic value similar to that of a change of scene. It actually involved a change of scenery, for the physical environment of the Jew on the Sabbath was quite transformed from what it was on weekdays. The home on the Sabbath was the home at its best. The paraphernalia and tools of one's occupational pursuits were removed from sight. None of the usual bustle of housekeeping was in evidence, since everything had been done in advance to make the house habitable and orderly. The meals, which had been prepared before the Sabbath had begun, were particularly festive both in respect to table decoration and menu. They served much more than a mere biological function; they were occasions for expressing all the sentiments associated with home life as well as the feeling of the home's place in the life of Israel and mankind.

This was effected by such rites as the lighting of candles, the *kiddush*, the benediction over the two *halot*, the singing of *zemirot* and the *birkat ha-mazon*. The initiation of the Sabbath with the lighting of the candles by the woman of the house and its termination with the *havdalah* ritual also helped to hallow the day. The house on the Sabbath should, as always in the past, appear at its best, and the meals should be of a more restful and ceremonial character than on week days. *Every effort should be made to incorporate these traditional rites into our homes.*

For the singing of the *zemirot*, the use of an instrument should be permitted, if this improves the musical level of the singing. Piano accompaniment may be added, or the playing of recorded versions of the *zemirot* and other Jewish music.

The Sabbath should also be the occasion on which we should expose ourselves more intensively to Jewish knowledge and issues of Jewish import. One should therefore

make every effort to read a Jewish classic or current Jewish text or Jewish periodical. In ages gone by it was customary to review at home on the Sabbath the weekly Torah portion, a practice well worth reviving, all the more so since adequate Bible translations with English commentaries are now available.

In addition to practicing the traditional rites referred to, the family, gathered about the table on the Sabbath eve and at Sabbath lunch, might engage in reading together appropriate devotional literature, interesting Jewish stories, poems, or other brief selections, and in the singing, in addition to the traditional *zemirot*, of the new *zemirot* garnered from the songs of modern Israel and appropriate compositions by modern Jewish song-writers.

The importance of public worship to Jewish religious life has already been stressed and there is no question that attendance at Synagogue services constitutes an important part of the optimum observance of the Sabbath. However, a home service, consisting of portions of the congregational prayerbook as well as passages culled from other sources, should be held by those who find it impossible to attend the Synagogue.

The rest of the day, which is not devoted to home rituals, meals and congregational worship, may appropriately be spent in relaxation, social visits, the enjoyment of literature and the arts, and wholesome play.

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### **What to do if the Full Observance of the Sabbath Is Impossible**

Unhappily, the conditions of Jewish life make such optimum observance impossible for a great number of Jews. But many more could enjoy it than take advantage of their opportunity. Let us state quite clearly that an optimum observance of the Sabbath is today possible for most American Jews since the wide adoption of the five-day work week.

A surprising amount of the Sabbath spirit can be preserved even under unfavorable circumstances, if there is the will to preserve it. The Sabbath can be celebrated, for example, by all the members of the family when they are at home. Friday night particularly should be family night, with all the children and both parents in attendance at the meal. We have already mentioned that attendance at Friday night services and Saturday morning services should be included. Every effort should be made to attend the Shabbat morning services even though but for an hour, in particular since they are the most elaborate and impressive of the day. Even those whose livelihood depends upon doing work on the Sabbath should not miss attendance for at least an hour at a Sabbath service.

An effort should be made to take all Sabbath meals at home. For people who have to work half a day on Saturday, the Synagogue might utilize Saturday afternoons to good advantage by making them the occasions for a communal *oneg shabbat*, a significant new Jewish usage, adapted from the traditional *seudah sh'lshit*.

If every Jew would endeavor to preserve as much of the Sabbath spirit as he can through the practice of as many of the religious rites and social usages as are possible for him, the Sabbath would continue to function as a potent influence in sanctifying and beautifying Jewish life.

An important question which needs to be considered is: Should a person refrain, because of the Sabbath from engaging in a calling which offers him a desirable opportunity for a congenial *career* but requires his working on that day? To the question here posed, the traditional, legalistic attitude would answer unequivocally in favor of sacrificing his career for the observance of the Sabbath.

On the basis of the suggested criteria, however, such a categorical answer cannot be given. If the Sabbath, as symbol of salvation or maximum self-realization, is to encourage us to seek the fullest development of our powers and their

employment to good purpose, clearly its observance should not involve the frustration of a legitimate and deeply felt ambition. Not only the preservation of our physical existence, but the complete expression of our will to live, which means our will to live most happily and effectively, must supersede the observance of the Sabbath. The decision on the question posed must rest with the individual. He alone is qualified to judge whether the optimum observance of the Sabbath or the pursuit of his chosen vocation means more to him in terms of self-fulfillment. If his decision is in favor of the vocation he prefers, it should be regarded as a legitimate expression of his desire for self-fulfillment.

## **THE OBSERVANCE OF THE FESTIVALS**

### **The Three Pilgrimage Festivals**

The Three Pilgrimage Festivals, *Pesah*, *Shavuot* and *Sukkot*, are all biblical in origin. Initially they were agricultural in character, reflecting the daily concern for sustenance in the lives of our ancestors. Rather early in the development of our people historical events came to be associated with them, which are also stated clearly in the biblical record. Thus *Pesah* reminds us of the exodus from Egypt, *Shavuot* recalls the revelation of the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai, and *Sukkot* the desert sojourn of our forefathers prior to their entering the Promised Land. In celebrating the Pilgrimage Festivals therefore the Jewish People expressed its awareness of God in the spheres of nature and history.

Even when, with the destruction of the Second Commonwealth in the year 70 C. E., the historical motif came to be emphasized more and more as a result of the loss of our natural environment, the nature motif was nonetheless recalled, even if only in symbolic form. Though our people no longer could harvest their own fruit, they still prayed on *Pesah* for dew in the Land of Israel, made mention of the first fruits on *Shavuot*, and carried *lulav* and *etrog* in solemn Synagogue procession on *Sukkot*, while praying on *Sh'mini Atzeret* for the blessing of rain in Eretz Yisrael. Alienated from their own soil, our people sought to realize through the Pilgrimage Festivals the memory of a glorious past as well as the promise of a greater future. With the establishment of the State of Israel in our days, the nature motif can again play a greater part in our celebration of these holidays, and thus the awareness of God in both nature

and history can once again be expressed with greater emphasis.

The Festivals should be celebrated through proper observance in the home as well as through participation in Synagogue services.

### **Pesah**

The Festival of *Pesah* teaches that freedom, whether national or personal, is at the very root of man's spiritual life, and is the prime condition of his self-fulfillment. It celebrates God as that force in human life which makes for freedom, and enjoins man to regard the achievement and exercise of freedom as a divine imperative.

The Festival of *Pesah*, in addition to the special order of worship at the Synagogue, calls for the home ceremonial known as "The *Seder*" at which the story of the redemption from Egyptian bondage is recited and songs of thanksgiving chanted.

Special attention should be given to the ritual of partaking of wine four times, each time to be preceded by a blessing, and to preparing the meal in accordance with tradition, that is, including the foods which have a symbolic significance, namely, *matzot*, bitter herbs, a roasted piece of meat, *haroset*, the hard-boiled eggs, and parsley. Wherever possible, Israeli products should be used.

*The New Haggadah\** has been edited not only with a view to interesting the children, but also to making the message of *Pesah* more meaningful for our day. It is also suggested that during the *Pesah* week the family read *The Song of Songs*.

Bread should not be eaten throughout the week. Aside from this, the recommendations regarding *kashrut* (below) apply to *Pesah* as well.

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\* Available at the Reconstructionist Press.

## **The Second Day of the Festivals**

Traditionally, the Pilgrimage Festivals were observed for two days at the beginning and, with the exception of *Shavuot*, for two days at the conclusion of the festival week. The second day was originally known as the *yom tov sheni shel galuyot*. It was originally instituted when outside Eretz Yisrael Jews had no way of knowing the exact date of the day in the lunar month any day happened to be. With the adoption of a scientific calendar, the observance of the second day is no longer necessary.

However, it is recommended that a communal *Seder* be held on the second night of *Pesah*.

### ***Shavuot***

The Festival of *Shavuot* stresses the doctrine of Torah, which calls upon a people to utilize its civilization in such a way as to reveal God as the Power that makes for human law and order, both individual and collective. As such God becomes identified as that force in the universe which sustains justice and righteousness. This idea is expressed through the reading of the Ten Commandments from the Torah during the morning service of *Shavuot*.

Confirmation or Graduation from Hebrew School usually takes place during the *Shavuot* Festival. It is recommended that the ceremony be held in the Synagogue, during the services of the day, and not at some arbitrary time chosen for the convenience of some people.

Wherever possible, Confirmation should consist of the graduation exercises for those who have completed the elementary and the high school departments of the congregation. The high school studies should include at least one year of study with the Rabbi.

At home, *Shavuot* should be initiated with a festive meal to be preceded by the lighting of candles, the chanting of the *kiddush*, and the blessing over the *hallah*. The home, as well as the Synagogue, should be decorated with greens.

Some time should be devoted to Torah study and the family may read together the Book of Ruth.

## **Sukkot**

The Festival of *Sukkot* is a festival of thanksgiving for the bounties of nature. As such it emphasizes man's dependence upon the forces of nature and, through the symbolism of the *sukkah* and *etrog* and *lulav*, stresses the idea that man approach nature in a spirit of responsible humility. Yet *Sukkot* expresses more than gratitude for the crops which sustain life. It teaches us to find in God the Power that makes for co-operation, for only then can the gifts of nature be appreciated in a religious spirit.

In its historical setting, *Sukkot* is to remind us of the forty years of wandering of our ancestors through the desert on their road to the Promised Land. The *sukkah* served them then as a temporary shelter from the vicissitudes of nature, and thus came to be regarded as an expression of their faith in God's protective power.

Wherever feasible, each family should be provided with a *lulav* and *etrog*. It is also suggested that these symbols be displayed in the home throughout the year.

Wherever possible, as in suburban areas, an outdoor *sukkah* should be built on the grounds of the home. Wherever an outdoor *sukkah* is not feasible, an indoor collapsible one over the dining-room table might be built out of some light metal and covered with leaved branches of trees.

In the home, the Festival should also be initiated with a festive meal, including the lighting of the candles, the chanting of the *kiddush*, and the blessing over the *hallah*. The family may also want to study during the *Sukkot* week the *Book of Kohelet* (Ecclesiastes), the reading of which is traditionally associated with *Sukkot*.

At the Synagogue, an especially important part of the service should be the procession with *lulav* and *etrog*, called *Hoshanot*.

## ***Sh'mini Atzeret and Simhat Torah***

Immediately following *Sukkot* come *Sh'mini Atzeret* and *Simhat Torah*, which are regarded by our tradition as festivals in their own right. They mark in a sense the conclusion of the Fall Festival cycle which began with *Rosh Hashanah*.

*Sh'mini Atzeret* (the Eighth Day of Assembly) is a Festival devoted to the idea and function of prayer, as well as to the hope that the coming winter will prove to be a blessing for next year's crops by providing sufficient water for the earth. For this reason the *Geshem* prayer is recited in the morning service.

### ***Simhat Torah***

*Simhat Torah* (Rejoicing in the Torah) follows immediately upon *Sh'mini Atzeret*. At the evening service, the ritual of *hakafot* takes place: the Torah scrolls are carried around the Synagogue. The children should participate in that ritual.

In the morning service of that day the reading of the Pentateuch is concluded and immediately begun anew for the coming year. It stresses the centrality of Torah in Jewish life.

A beautiful tradition is that of *Hattan Torah* and *Hattan Bereshit*, the honored persons who are called to the Torah reading at the conclusion of the entire Torah and immediately thereafter at the beginning of the reading cycle. Since women should be entitled to participate in synagogal activity, it is suggested that a man, with the title *Hattan Torah* be called to the reading of the final section of the Pentateuch and a woman, with the title *Kallat Bereshit*, be called to the reading of the opening section of the Pentateuch.

Those congregations which do not observe the second days of the Pilgrimage Festivals should incorporate the rituals for *Simhat Torah* on *Sh'mini Atzeret*.

## **THE HIGH HOLY DAYS**

Unlike the three Pilgrimage Festivals, the High Holy Days (*Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*) are not related to either nature or history in any direct sense. They rather address themselves to the human predicament, to man's failings, on the one hand, and on the other hand to his ability to reach out for the very heights of heaven. They thus express the awareness of God as the Power that makes for human responsibility and human regeneration. The doctrine of repentance and atonement, which is essential for an understanding of these days, implies that man "the sinner" is also capable of being man "the saint," for the gates of repentance are never closed.

### ***Selihot***

It is customary, prior to the High Holy Days, to assemble in the Synagogue to recite penitential prayers, known as *Selihot*. Though traditionally these are recited for an entire month prior to *Rosh Hashanah*, it is now confined in many congregations to midnight the Saturday before. When *Rosh Hashanah* occurs on a Monday or Tuesday, the first *Selihot* services are held two Saturday nights before *Rosh Hashanah*.

The midnight service should be made impressive through appropriate prayers, readings and music.

### ***Rosh Hashanah***

*Rosh Hashanah* (New Year) with its prayers and its distinctively symbolic act of sounding the *shofar*, affirms that the ultimate destiny of mankind is to submit to the sovereignty of God, or to the universality of justice, freedom

and peace. It therefore calls upon the individual Jew to accept his share of the responsibility for ushering in the Kingdom of God.

Attendance at the Synagogue is essential on *Rosh Ha-shanah*. Two days are observed, since this Holyday is not in the same category as the Festivals (and in Israel it is also observed two days).

It is customary to introduce at the table the rounded *hallah* and the honey, symbolizing the round of the years and the sweetness added.

### ***Yom Kippur***

*Yom Kippur* is a day of fasting and prayer when we strive to re-awaken the latent spiritual power in our souls so that it may become an effective force in our daily conduct.

Attendance at the Synagogue is essential throughout the day. Abstaining from food during the entire *Yom Kippur* enables the mind to concentrate on the basic problems of the spiritual life. If, however, one's health is likely to be impaired as a result of fasting, one may forego it.

### **Memorial Services**

The *yizkor* service is generally held in the Synagogue during the three Pilgrimage Festivals, and on *Yom Kippur*. Those who attend the Synagogue should remain for these services, whether they have sustained a loss in their immediate families or not. The *yizkor* service should always include a memorial to those who have died for the sake of their faith; every Jew should feel personally bereaved by the death of martyrs and saints.

The practice of some congregations to send the children out of the Synagogue during the *yizkor* service is mere superstition and should not be continued.

## **OTHER HOLIDAYS AND MEMORIAL DAYS**

### **Hanukkah**

*Hanukkah* commemorates the frustration of Antiochus Epiphanes' efforts to destroy Judaism. It also directs our attention to the way we should cope with non-Jewish civilizations with which we come in contact.

This Festival should be observed in the home during the entire eight days, with the lighting of the candles, the chanting of the benedictions, and the giving of gifts to the children.

The evening meal of each day should be accompanied by appropriate readings and songs on the significance of the Festival.

### **Purim**

*Purim* is the occasion for rejoicing over the survival of the Jewish People. "In every generation men arose to annihilate us, but the Holy One, Blessed be He, delivered us from their hands."

All the members of the family should attend the Synagogue for the reading of the *Megillah*.

On the following evening a festive dinner should be arranged, at which all the members of the family should be present. Appropriate readings and songs should accompany the dinner.

Gifts to the poor, contributions to the Jewish National Fund, or to any philanthropic fund are proper on this occasion.

## **Tisha B'Av (The Ninth of Av)**

*Tisha B'Av* is a day of mourning which commemorates the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E., and of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. The establishment of the State of Israel in our time should not be considered a reason of abolishing *Tisha B'Av*. As a day of mourning it should be used to recall other tragedies in the life of the Jewish People, and especially the holocaust under the Nazis.

The recital of the Book of Lamentations and the reading of *kinot* (threnodies) take place at the Synagogue. If Synagogue attendance is not feasible, the family should come together for the reading of these texts, or any others which help to experience the solemnity of the day.

Fasting on *Tisha B'Av* from sundown to sundown is traditional. Some may wish to skip breakfast; others may modify their menu in some manner to indicate that the tradition is not entirely disregarded.

The traditional prohibitions regarding weddings, bathing, swimming and eating meat during the nine days prior to *Tisha B'Av* may be disregarded.

## **Hamishah Assar B'Shevat (the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month Shevat) (also called Tu B'Shevat)**

Observed as Jewish Arbor Day, it has come into its own as a result of the reclamation of the Land of Israel as the Jewish homeland. It is a day observed in Jewish schools and organizations. Families should mark it by planting trees in Israel through the Jewish National Fund.

## **Yom Ha-Atzmaut (Israel Independence Day)**

Since the establishment of the State of Israel, the 5th of *Iyar* has become a holiday observed by Jews throughout the world, for on that day Israel's Declaration of Independence was formally issued. Appropriate prayers and readings for that day should be recited.

The Hallel Psalms as well as Psalm 126 should be recited.

Where no formal services are arranged in the Synagogue or center, cognizance of the day should be taken in the home at any one of the formal meals taken together by the family.

### **Yom Ha-Shoah** (*the twenty-seventh of Nissan*)

This is a memorial day, established by the State of Israel, to commemorate the six million who died during the Nazi holocaust. It should be observed on the day itself by lighting a *Yahrzeit* candle in the home, and by reading literature growing out of those years. Synagogues may conduct special memorial services as part of the Shabbat worship during the week either preceding or following *Nissan* 27.

### **Civic Holidays**

Since American Jews live in two civilizations, they should approach civic holidays in a spiritual mood. Thanksgiving Day, January 1st, Memorial Day and other American national holidays should be observed with the reading of appropriate prayers and the singing of songs such as may be found in *The Faith of America*.\* These services may be conducted either at home or in the Synagogue or center.

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\* Available at the Reconstructionist Press.

## **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON PUBLIC WORSHIP**

### **At the Synagogue**

Only those who are familiar with the ritual and pattern of worship, through regular attendance and participation with the congregation, can feel the full effectiveness of the service.

It is exceedingly important that the Rabbi involve the Cantor, the musical director as well as the ritual or religious services committee in the overall planning of the services. In addition, it should also be the task of the ritual committee to study the prayerbook and other aspects of Synagogue observance so that it may discuss with some degree of competence the form of worship practiced in a given Synagogue.

The form of the service should take cognizance of the fact that an exalted emotional mood cannot be sustained over too extended a period of time. Therefore, needless repetition in the same service should be avoided (e.g., the threefold recitation of *Kol Nidre*, the repetition of the silent *Amidah*, etc.). The Shabbat morning service, for example, should not last for more than two or two and one-quarter hours. The worship text should be used in such a way as to utilize the Jewish tradition sufficiently to contribute to the worshipers' self-identification with the Jewish People. The congregation should have ample opportunity to participate both in singing and in recitation. Lay people should be encouraged to conduct part of the service, both in Hebrew and English.

The Cantor should make every effort to introduce new melodies into the service. On the other hand, the musical

portion of the service should not be transformed into a concert. And in every service there should be found both constant and variable elements, to insure continuity on the one hand, and freshness and spontaneity on the other.

The constant elements should be taken from the traditional ritual. They may be rendered either in Hebrew or English, chanted or sung. The variable elements should be generally rendered in English since their content is to be immediately relevant to the minds of the worshipers. However, where Hebrew is widely understood the use of Hebrew is recommended. The Rabbi may want to conduct on occasions at least an ongoing commentary on the worship text.

### **Study As a Form of Worship**

The Torah reading should be shortened, to allow more time for the variable elements. It is therefore advisable to adopt the three-year cycle, which involves reading the first third of each *sidrah* each week during the first year; the second third the second year, etc. At times, it might be advisable to include Torah readings other than those prescribed for a given Shabbat. Particularly, portions from the Book of Deuteronomy, which according to the calendar, is read during the summer months, should be used for such additions or substitutions. To make the reading as intelligible as possible, each worshiper should be equipped with both a Hebrew and an English text of the Torah, and where feasible also a commentary in English. The leader should precede the reading with an explanation of the *sidrah* and of the *haftarah*. In general there should be a greater emphasis on study—and even discussion—of Jewish sources than has been the case in most Synagogues. Study has always been regarded as a form of worship.

Women should be considered the equal of men in regard to the distribution of the *aliyot*; and wherever laymen are called upon to lead in the services, women should be included equally.

The text of the prayer book should omit those prayers which do not represent the sincere convictions of the worshipers. Thus, for example, prayers for the restoration of the Temple, of animal sacrifices, prayers affirming belief in a personal Messiah, in bodily resurrection, in the Jews as a Chosen People—such prayers, if they do not express the honest conviction\* of the congregations should not be included.

### **Music in the Service**

Musical elements of a variable nature may be sung in Hebrew or in English. But care should be taken to acquaint the congregation with the meaning of any composition sung in Hebrew. Where there is a choir, it should be encouraged to assist the congregation in learning new melodies. It should also introduce new compositions, encouraging composers to create for the Synagogue. In addition, the revival of older works can be a source of inspiration.

The Cantor may face either the Ark or the congregation. But if he faces the congregation, care should be taken that he concentrates upon the text or the music, rather than upon the worshipers.

Since all participants in a service should themselves be worshipers, Jews should be called upon to play the musical instruments. Where no Jew is available for this purpose, a non-Jew may be permitted to play.

There is no reason why the use of a musical instrument should not be introduced if it contributes to the beauty of the service. Care should be taken, however, that the instrument should not overpower the voices of the congregants or in any wise discourage the act of participation of the worshipers. It should be played by a competent musician.

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\* See the Introduction to the Sabbath Prayerbook published by the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation.

## **The Choir**

Choirs of mixed voices are recommended, especially when they are drawn from the amateur members of the congregation. This does not mean that all-male choirs are not equally desirable, so long as they are preferred on musical grounds and not as implying the impropriety of mixed choirs. As in the case of musical instruments, the choir is there to assist, not to replace the congregation. During the course of any service there should not be more than three selections to be rendered exclusively by the choir.

Choirs should be composed of Jews, wherever possible. In some communities it is not possible to obtain the services of Jewish singers; in those instances non-Jewish singers may be engaged. But definite preference should be given to Jewish singers, inasmuch as the singers should be regarded as an integral part of the congregation.

## **Covered Heads During Worship and the Use of the Tallit**

The practice of covering the head is regarded by our tradition as an outward symbol of the experience of holiness. Since there is no esthetic or ethical reason for its elimination we recommend that it be retained.

The use of the *tallit* should be approached in the same spirit. The *tallit* together with the head covering has become part of the uniform of Jewish worship. The *tallit* contains the traditional *tzitzit* prescribed in the Torah. There is every reason to retain the practice of wearing it during worship.

## **THE LIFETIME OF THE JEW**

### **Marriage**

The survival of the Jewish People and its religious civilization is best assured through the marriage of Jews to Jews. Therefore it is essential that children be brought up to understand clearly that mixed marriages are not regarded as desirable.

If, however, a non-Jew wishes to be married to a Jew, every effort should be made to convert the non-Jew to Judaism prior to the wedding. If, however, the non-Jew refuses to be converted prior to the marriage, but pledges to bring up the children as Jews, the couple should be encouraged to marry civilly, with a religious ceremony deferred until such time as conversion takes place.

Marriages may take place at any time except Sabbaths, Festivals and Holydays. The observance of restrictions during the *sefirah* or prior to *Tisha B'Av* is optional.

On the Shabbat immediately preceding the wedding, the couple should be called to the Torah for an *aliyah* and the recitation of appropriate blessings.

The wedding ceremony should be performed by a Rabbi as a representative of the Jewish community, since the establishment of a new Jewish family is a matter of concern to Jewry as a whole. Since the question of the *ketubah* (marriage contract) and *get* (divorce) are matters of *halakhah*, they do not fall within the scope of this guide.

The ceremony should be held under a *huppah* or a bower (of flowers, for instance) designed for that purpose.

The plain gold band is preferred, but should not be considered obligatory. When a double ring ceremony is per-

formed, an appropriate formula should be adopted to accompany the placing of the ring on the finger of the groom, since no traditional formula exists.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the groom should break a glass, preserving the tradition of introducing a symbolic note of sorrow (traditionally, symbolic specifically of the destruction of the ancient Temple) to remind the couple that even in the moment of personal joy, they must not forget those of their people, and of other peoples, who still live in fear and want.

### **Circumcision**

All male children should be circumcised on the eighth day, unless by the orders of a physician the circumcision be postponed. At the present time, many hospitals require that the mother (and child) leave before the end of one week, and hence before the time for circumcision. Nevertheless it is recommended that the tradition of circumcising on the eighth day be retained, even though it may require performing the act at home or readmitting the child into the hospital.

A circumcision should generally be performed by a professional *mohel*. But if none is available, or definite objection is made to the *mohel*, a physician may perform the circumcision, as long as he knows the traditional benediction and is accompanied by a Rabbi (or some other duly qualified Jew) who can recite the rest of the prayers and name the child.

### **Naming of a Child**

On a Shabbat following a birth the parents of a newborn child should come to the Synagogue for the formal naming of that child. This should be done even in the case of a boy whose name has been given to him at the circumcision. This enables the congregation to share in the *simhah*.

A Jewish child should have a *Hebrew first name*. Parents should not hesitate to retain, in the English form of the name, the closest approximation of the Hebrew. Nothing so helps the child to identify himself as a Jew than the possession of a Hebrew first name.

### ***Bar and Bat Mitzvah***

Boys on becoming thirteen and girls in their thirteenth year become *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah*, respectively. Since they are too young to understand fully (if at all) the significance of the rite, it is desirable that the parents utilize the occasion to dedicate *themselves* to the further Jewish upbringing of their children.

The act of commitment on the part of the parents should take the form of a declaration to replace the traditional one (*barukh... shep'tarani...*) in which the father thanked God for having rid him of the responsibility for the child. A suggested text would be: *Barukh... shezi-kani l'gadel et ha-yeled ha-zeh.* (Blessed be the Eternal who granted me the privilege of raising this child.)

The ceremony in the Synagogue must be made meaningful through adequate education on the part of the child for not less than four years prior to the occasion. This involves the active cooperation of the parents.

It is recommended that, for at least one year prior to the ceremony, parents accompany their children to a special *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* class designed to prepare them for the ceremony and, even more significantly, for the years of growth and development ahead.

During the year prior to the ceremony, parents should accompany their children to the Synagogue on Shabbat—at least once a month, preferably every week. Thus the children may come to recognize the commitment which their parents are making to live a Jewish life as well as to train their children to do so.

The actual ceremony should be modest, avoiding extravagance and ostentation, and should be appropriate to the religious character of the occasion.

### ***Ben and Bat Torah***

Since the *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* ceremonies take place when the boy and girl are thirteen or less, the commitments made on those occasions are made by the parents. It is desirable, therefore, that at some juncture in their lives, during the following years, *personal* commitments be made by the sons and daughters. It is therefore recommended that, upon graduation from high school, boys and girls participate in a new ritual to be known as *Ben and Bat Torah*.

This ritual should climax a period of three or four years of study following the *Bar and Bat Mitzvah*.

[For Confirmation see page 24]

## **BEREAVEMENT AND MOURNING RITES**

At the death of a dear one, arrangements should be made for the earliest possible funeral, in consultation with a Rabbi.

The Synagogue should be used for funerals only upon the recommendation of the Rabbi and the board of trustees. This honor should be reserved for men and women of learning and piety, and/or who have served the community selflessly.

The congregation should set up a *hevra kadisha*, or committee on bereavement, to assist the family in making necessary arrangements for the funeral and for services in the house of the mourners. The committee should also take upon itself the duty of visiting the mourners during *shiv'ah*.

“Visitation” prior to the funeral should be discouraged. Those who wish to express their sorrow to the bereaved family should do so in the form of a visit to the home during the *shiv'ah* week.

The funeral itself should be simple and brief. Eulogies should generally be pronounced by the Rabbi. However, relatives and close friends might be encouraged to speak, particularly if the Rabbi has not been especially close to the deceased.

Ostentation should be scrupulously avoided in the conduct of the funeral. This applies to the choice of a casket which should be as simple and modest as possible. The casket should be closed during the conduct of the funeral service.

There is no objection to flowers as such; but due consideration should be given to the greater importance of donating funds to worthy causes.

The cutting of the ribbon (black ribbon is generally provided by the mortician, to avoid cutting the clothes) should take place prior to the service, in the privacy of the family room, to the accompaniment of the traditional *berakhah*. The ribbon may be worn during the first week.

*Shiv'ah* should be observed for one week. Where this is manifestly impossible, a minimum of three days, however, should be observed. The mourners should be seated during these days, not necessarily on benches. They should not consider it their function to act as hosts to the visitors. The party atmosphere should be avoided. Food and drinks should not be served.

It is suggested that visitors do not regard it as necessary to bring gifts to the family. Contributions in memory of the deceased are recommended.

Services should be held at home, mornings and evenings. However, if this is not feasible, evenings only. If this cannot be arranged, the family should attend the service at the Synagogue and return home immediately thereafter. On Shabbat, mourning is suspended; but this should not mean that the family should return to normal daily programs. The Sabbath spirit should be preserved.

When the *shiv'ah* begins less than a week before a festival, it ends with the beginning of the festival and should not be resumed after it.

When the funeral takes place during the week of *hol ha-moed*, the *shiv'ah* should begin after the close of the festival; but because of the delay it is suggested that a briefer period be set aside, such as three days, instead of the entire week.

It is recommended that the family attend services on the Shabbat during the year following a bereavement. Where daily services are held, effort should be made to attend these as often as possible. In general, the *kaddish* should be recited in the presence of a *minyan* (ten persons constituting a quorum for public worship).

On the occasion of the *yahrzeit*, the family should light a *yahrzeit* candle at home and, where daily services are available, attend for the recital of *kaddish*. However, even when the exact date is not observed, the family should attend the Synagogue on the Shabbat prior to the date. The congregation should send notices to the families concerned, urging attendance. Where it is the custom to read aloud the names of those whose *yahrzeit* occur during the coming week (at a Shabbat service), only the names of those whose relatives attend the service should be read. Adequate notice should be given of this rule, so that members of the family are sure to be there—or understand why the name of their dear one is not read.

In the event that no relatives survive, the congregation should formally “adopt” the deceased, and on the *yahrzeit* have the name read. Under no circumstances should the sexton (*shamash*) be engaged to recite *kaddish* for anyone.

Tombstones (and/or headstones) at the cemetery should be dedicated after at least six months, but not later than one year after the death. These should be simple, and as inexpensive as possible. Wherever feasible, laymen should be encouraged to read the service. The ceremony should be simple, confined to the family and close friends. Here again, contributions to worthy causes are preferable to expenditures on costly memorial stones.

A spouse should not remarry after the death of his/her spouse until at least six months have passed. It is preferable that remarriages do not take place until after the memorial stone has been erected.

It is not necessary to dress in black or other sombre colors after the week of *shiv'ah*.

## **KASHRUT**

The most obvious value of conforming to traditional dietary regulations, irrespective of their specific content, is that this conformity serves as a means of self-identification with the Jewish People and its ideal aims. All civilizations tend to develop certain dietary habits which, when their adherents find themselves among people of different diet, become symbolically significant. Most Europeans, for example, would not regard flesh of a cat or dog as "Christian food."

Among Jews this process of hallowing national culture traits received emphasis from the early recognition of Jewish nationhood as "holy," i.e., as of utmost importance to the Jew in his quest for a worthwhile life. In consequence, every distinguishing mark of the Jew tended to become a symbol of all that made Jewish life holy and acquired a derivative sacredness through this symbolism. Thus the distinctive garb of the Jew, the fringed *tallit*, was expected to remind the Jew of "all the commandments of the Lord." Similarly, the distinctive diet of the Jew became symbolically associated with loyalty to all the significant purposes of Jewish life. Psychologically the dietary regulations, although lacking in intrinsic value, have functioned for most observant Jews as effective symbols of a disciplined loyalty to Jewish religion.

Some of the dietary regulations have a more concrete and specific symbolism. Thus the regulations for *shehitah* and the prohibition of blood as food carry the implication that even animal life is sacred, that man's permission to eat flesh is not to be taken for granted but to be regarded as a concession. This is indicated by the requirement that the blood, which our fathers identified with the life of the animal, had

to be rendered back to God and might not be consumed by man.

At all events, the avoidance of inflicting unnecessary pain on the animal is evident in many of the regulations concerning the method of slaughter.

### ***Proposed Adaptation of Kashrut to Modern Conditions***

In determining our attitude toward *kashrut*, our object should be to retain as much of its observance as is necessary for effective self-identification with the peoplehood and religion of Israel, while abolishing or relaxing those observances which do not serve that purpose.

The observance of *kashrut* in the home offers fewer difficulties than elsewhere, and is particularly important because of the indispensable role of the home in preserving the continuity of Jewish life. A stricter standard of conformity to traditional usage can therefore be required in the home than abroad. There is usually no need at home for eating the flesh of forbidden animals, for serving milk-products and meat-products at the same meal, or for serving meat that has not been slaughtered, salted and purged according to Jewish ritual. It is also possible in the home to maintain a distinction between pots and dishes designed for meat products and those designed for dairy products.

This does not mean, however, that *kashrut* should be completely disregarded when one is away from home. To do so makes its perpetuation in the home difficult for psychological reasons. People who acquire a taste for certain forbidden foods that are served them outside the home are almost certain to bring them eventually to their own tables, at first on special occasions and then habitually.

The following distinctions, however, seem reasonable:

1. No regulations with regard to pots and dishes need be applied outside the home.

2. Foods consisting wholly, or in the main, of biblically forbidden meat or sea food should not be eaten.

Besides these distinctions between the observance of *kashrut* at home and abroad, the following relaxations of the traditional regulations are suggested by the proposed criteria:

1. All rules regarding *kashrut* must be considered as applying *lekhav'hillah* (from the start, directly), but a mistake in the use of a dish or pot need not be considered as necessitating a special ritual of *kashering*.

2. All meals served by Jewish communal institutions, Synagogues and other Jewish associations should conform to the maximal traditional standards. Where the lack of facilities, however, make impossible a community meal on such a standard, the fullest possible provision should be made for satisfying the traditional standards of any who attend. It is also suggested that where kosher facilities are unavailable, the kitchen of the public institution be limited to the preparation of dairy meals.

### **Some Exceptions**

The rules so far considered are those that are deemed applicable where Jewish communal life makes kosher food accessible without necessitating a diet lacking in essential food elements. It cannot be expected that soldiers in a campaign, sailors at sea, explorers in remote regions, or even traveling salesmen in small towns and villages far from any Jewish center will be able to observe *kashrut* in detail even with the relaxations suggested, except at a cost to health which would be excessive. A token observance of *kashrut* would still be possible in abstinence from pig and forbidden sea food. The insistence on *shehitah* must, however, be limited by the availability of meat that has been ritually slaughtered.

This raises the question to what extent the difficulties of observing *kashrut* should be permitted to limit one's move-

ments, choice of residence, or of occupation. As in the matter of Sabbath observance, such decisions must be left to the individual. Whatever conclusions he arrives at must be considered as legitimate. He should, however, endeavor to observe as many of the traditional regulations as he can observe without frustrating what to him are more important permanent interests.

## G L O S S A R Y

(in the order in which these terms appear in the *Guide*)

**Shema**—The first word of the affirmation of God's unity, usually rendered in English: "Hear, O Israel, the Eternal Our God, the Eternal is One." (Deuteronomy, 6)

**Tallit**—Prayershawl, on the four corners of which the *tzitzit* or fringes are attached.

**Tefillin**—Phylacteries, used for daily worship; one is placed on the head, the other on the arm. Traditionally, they are identified with the verse, "And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand and for frontlets between thine eyes." (Deuteronomy, 6)

**Shabbos goy**—A Gentile who would be engaged to perform work on the Shabbat which an observant Jew would not do because of the laws prohibiting work on the Shabbat.

**Halot**—Special bread prepared usually for Shabbat and Festivals; "twist."

**Zemirot**—Table songs usually sung on Shabbat and Festivals.

**Birkat Ha-mazon**—Grace after meals.

**Havdalah**—Ceremony performed at the conclusion of the Shabbat; literally, division (between the sacred and the profane).

**Oneg Shabbat**—Joy of the Shabbat, generally a social gathering at which refreshments are served, and some form of Sabbath entertainment is offered.

**Seudah Sh'lshit**—Literally, "third meal." Traditionally, the third meal on Shabbat was taken communally, accompanied by a period of study and singing. (Often Jews took only two meals during the week; the third meal was thus a special treat.)

**Haroset**—A sweet dish prepared especially for the *Seder*, symbolizing the hope which sweetened the bitterness of the Israelites' slavery in Egypt.

**Kiddush**—Literally, "sanctification." The benedictions chanted at the beginning of the Shabbat.

**Geshem**—Rain; it refers to the prayer for rain.

**Shofar**—The ram's horn, blown on *Rosh Hashanah* as part of the Synagogue service.

*Megillah*—The biblical Book of Esther, read on Purim.

*Yahrzeit*—The anniversary—usually of a death.

*Kol Nidre*—Solemn prayer initiating the *Yom Kippur* worship.

*Amidah*—Standing; the prayers recited while standing.

*Sidrah*—Weekly portion of the Torah read in the Synagogue.

*Haftarah*—Weekly portion from the Prophetic books, chanted after the reading of the weekly portion from the Torah.

*Aliyot*—Those called to the reading of the Torah.

*Tzitzit*—The fringes traditionally attached to the four corners of the garment, now mainly associated with the corners of the *tallit*.

*Sefirah*—The period from *Pesah* to *Shavuot* (seven weeks) traditionally regarded as a period of mourning. Literally, “counting” of the days.

*Halakhah*—Jewish law.

*Simhah*—Joyous occasion.

*Shiv'ah*—Traditional period of mourning, lasting seven days. Literally “seven.”

*Berakhah*—Benediction.

*Hol Ha-moed*—The intermediate days of a Festival.

*Kaddish*—Traditional prayer associated with mourning.

*Shehitah*—Method of ritual slaughtering.



